



City of Santa Barbara
Planning Division

Memorandum

DATE: October 9, 2018

TO: Historic Landmarks Commission

FROM: Nicole Hernandez, City Urban Historian

SUBJECT: Removal of Dwight Murphy Field From the Potential Historic Resources List

ADDRESS: 501 Niños Drive

The city purchased the 10.5 acres of land from Pacific Southwest Trust and Savings Bank in 1925 for the Municipal Soccer Field. Situated between the railroad tracks and a medium density tourist and residential neighborhood. The athletic park contains a soccer field, a baseball field, an exercise area, children's play area, a service building, picnic area, and paved parking. The soccer field has aluminum bleachers and chain link fencing. In September 1933, the city dedicated and named the field for Dwight Murphy, a civic leader that served as Park Commissioner



Chairman from 1927-1931. During World War II Army troops used the fields for recreation and training. The City constructed new restrooms and locker facilities in 1969 of exposed concrete block with terra-cotta tile. In January 1976, the Bicentennial Freedom Train parked next to the field and provided entertainment and exhibits in nearby public areas. In 1987, the City re-designed the parking lots, added bleachers and added a new softball field layout. In 1991, the City added a new fitness area. Dwight Murphy Fields continue to serve as sports and soccer fields.

The athletic fields are important for the Parks and Recreation Department and the use is protected by the zoning ordinance. However, without any specific historic features to protect, the property does not qualify to be

designated a historic resources under the following criteria for designation as Structure of Merit of City Landmark. Criteria provided by the Municipal Code, Section 22.22.040:



A. Its character, interest, or value as a significant part of the heritage of the City, the State, or the Nation;

The Dwight Murphy Field does not retain any physical features that demonstrate a specific character, interest, or value to the heritage of Santa Barbara. Although the field is an important place for soccer clubs and other athletic events, there is not a specific landscape design or significant design of any park features. In contrast, other Santa Barbara parks are noted as historically significant for a specific feature; for example: the Municipal Tennis Courts that represent a Works Progress Administration project of 1931, the Alameda Plaza Bandstand constructed in 1888, the Plaza Del Mar Bandshell of 1919, and the designed landscape of East Beach Boulevard Historic District is noted for its specific design and designers as well as specific landscape features including sandstone walls and fountain. Dwight Murphy Field does not qualify under criterion A.

B. Its location as a site of a significant historic event;

Its location is not the site of a significant event and does not qualify under Criterion B.

C. Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the City, the State, or the Nation;

The site was named for Dwight Murphy, as civic leader and Park Commission Chairman. This was a commemoration after the City purchased the field and not directly associated with Dwight Murphy and the park does not qualify under Criterion C.

D. Its exemplification of a particular architectural style or way of life important to the City, the State, or the Nation;

The park exemplifies athletic fields, but no specific design, structure, or landscape feature that conveys a sense of time, place, or way of life of 1925. The park does not qualify under Criterion D.

E. Its exemplification of the best remaining architectural type in a neighborhood;

The park does not have any character defining architectural elements that would demonstrate the best in the neighborhood, as the only features are the restrooms, locker rooms, bleachers, parking lots,

softball fields, and fitness area all added within the last 50 years and do not convey a sense of time and place of 1925. The field does not qualify under criterion E.

F. Its identification as the creation, design, or work of a person or persons whose effort has significantly influenced the heritage of the City, the State, or the Nation;

No architect is noted as designing the athletic fields in 1925. The park does not qualify under Criterion F.

G. Its embodiment of elements demonstrating outstanding attention to architectural design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship;

No elements of the athletic fields demonstrate outstanding architectural design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship. The park does not qualify under criterion G.

H. Its relationship to any other landmark if its preservation is essential to the integrity of that landmark;

No other landmark is in the vicinity of the athletic fields and they do not qualify under criterion H.

I. Its unique location or singular physical characteristic representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood;

There is no established or familiar feature that represents the period of significance of 1925 that would qualify this as a historic resource. Although it has remained athletic fields in the East Beach neighborhood, it has been altered extensively over the past 50 years. The park does not qualify under criterion I.

J. Its potential of yielding significant information of archaeological interest;

The site had an archeological study completed in 1989 that concluded that no documented historic archeological sites present within the project parcel. The park does not qualify under criterion J.

K. Its integrity as a natural environment that strongly contributes to the well-being of the people of the City, the State, or the Nation. (Ord. 5333, 2004; Ord. 4848, 1994; Ord. 3900 §1, 1977.)

As this is an athletic field and not a natural environment, it does not qualify under criterion K.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends that the HLC vote to remove the property from the Potential Historic Resources List as it does not qualify for the criteria to qualify as a historic resource.

Works Cited:

Days, Mary Louis. "Parks Histories". City of Santa Barbara. 1977

